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LETTER (A)
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A
LETTER

FROM A

Gentleman at *Rome*,

TO HIS

Friend in *LONDON*;

GIVING

An Account of some very surprizing Cures
in the *King's Evil* by the *Touch*, lately
effected in the Neighbourhood of that City.

Wherein is contained,

The compleatest History of this miraculous
Power, formerly practised by the Kings of *England*,
ever yet made publick; the Certainty of which is
confirmed by the most eminent Writers of this
Nation, both Catholicks and Protestants, as *Malmf-*
bury, *Alured*, *Brompton*, *Polidore Virgil*, *Harpsfield*,
&c. and *Tooker*, *Heylin*, *Collier*, *Echard*, &c.

Translated out of the Italian.

*King Edward the Confessor was the first that cured this
Distemper, and from him it has descended as an He-
reditary Miracle upon all his Successors. To dispute
the Matter of Fact, is to go to the Excess of Scepticism,
to deny our Senses, and to be incredulous even to Ri-
diculousness.* Collier's *Ecclesiast. Hist.* Vol. 1.

L O N D O N:

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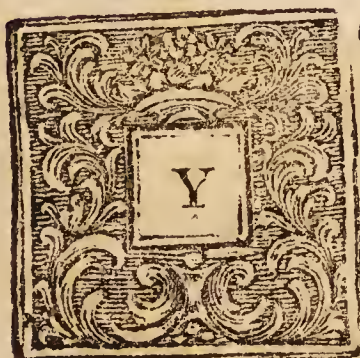
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*A LETTER from a
Gentleman at Rome, to
his Friend in London,
&c.*

S I R,



YOU know, as I am a Person naturally of some tolerable Curiosity; so I have every Year, for these Four Years last past, given my self the agreeable Entertainment of travelling most Part of the Year into foreign Parts; where my Method is, not only to procure all the most curious Books that are publish'd relating to any Art or Science; but likewise to minute down the most remarkable Occurrences that happen, whether they relate to Ecclesiastical, Historical or Political Knowledge.

One of the most remarkable that has happen'd during my residing in *Italy* this Summer, was the wonderful and surprizing Effect of the Touching for the Cure of that, generally speaking, incurable Disease, commonly call'd the *King's Evil*.

There were among a considerable Number who resorted from distant Parts to be touched, some deformed with large Swellings or Bunches under their Jaws, seemingly filled with corrupted Matter; some disfigured by red, watry, inflamed Eyes, and extraverted Eye-Lids, which looked very horribly; and others, with hard Knots and Tumours on other Parts of their Bodies, the Matter contained in which affected the very Bones; and, as the Surgeons told me, did pierce even to the Marrow.

These miserable and deplorable Objects, as on one hand they filled me with the most Christian and tender Compassion, when I seriously reflected on their Miseries; so, on the other hand, I was affected with the most exalted Joy and Astonishment, when I considered, that a Power had been given to *some*, not only to alleviate, but to cure those miserable Creatures, that laboured under such painful and calamitous Infirmities. Into what a State of Degeneracy and Thoughtlessness

is human Nature fallen, thought I ? that have their Senses to testify the Power and Efficacy of this Divine Gift, and so little Reverence and Honour paid to the *Hand* that effects such surprizing Things ; or that can suffer such Matters to be transacted in so learned a World, and not be affected by them, after the strongest and most sensible manner ! I considered, that the Prophets of old had, among the many extraordinary Things they did, the Power of curing Diseases after a very miraculous Manner ; and the many extraordinary Things which happen in the World at this Day, is an evident Proof that the Power of God Almighty is not confined to such a narrow Sphere of Activity as some unthinking Persons would perswade us to believe. Have we not had the strongest Testimonies, even the Evidence of Eye-witnesses, to prove the Kings of *England* have enjoyed this supernatural Gift ever since the Reign of *Edward the Confessor* : and can we already forget the Multitudes of Cures, whereby, among other glorious Things, our late Queen of transcending Excellence, signalized her self ? Can you, I say, already let these Things escape your Memories so soon ; or suffer the extraordinary Things of this Nature, which

which are still effected *Abroad*, to pass unregarded by a fatal and incurious Negligence? For shame *Britons* awake, and let not an universal Lethargy seize you; but consider that you ought to be accounted unworthy the Knowledge and Benefits you may receive by this extraordinary Power, if it be despised or neglected.

As for those surprizing Instances of the Cure of the *King's Evil* by the Touch, which I have seen effected this Summer in *Rome* and its Neighbourhood, I shall reserve them to the Conclusion of this Letter, and take this Opportunity of giving you the History of this miraculous Method of Cure from *St. Edward the Confessor*, to the present Time; and shew, that our Histories are so full of confirming Evidences of the Truth of it, that we are guilty of the grossest Neglect and Omission, when we mention it without the highest Veneration and Esteem. And since I came to a Resolution of Writing as compleat a History of this supernatural Power as I was capable of, I apply'd my self to a very learned Person, Seignior *Vincenti*, Librarian to his Holiness, who has furnished me with a vast Number of Books relating to our *English* Ecclesiastical and Historical Affairs,

fairs, whereby I find I am able to give a fuller and much more compleat Account of this Matter, than perhaps has been ever hitherto made publick. I know by this means I shall gratify you, who are one of my most inquisitive Correspondents; who will, without doubt, be highly pleased to see this *miraculous Power* set in a clear Light, supported by a long List of learned Authors, who are, as it were, so many living Witnesses of the Truth of it, and whose Suffrages will, by this means, be rescued from the Oblivion and Obscurity in which some of them have been involved many Hundred Years. The first Book which was put into my Hands upon this Occasion, was the Life of that holy and pious King, *St. Edward the Confessor*, written by the Reverend Father *Jerome Porter*, Priest and Monk of the Holy Order of *St. Benedict*, of the Congregation of *England*, collected chiefly out of the Works of *Alured*, Abbot of *Rhieval*, *J. Capgrave*, *W. Malmsbury*, *R. Hovedine*, *M. Westminster*, *W. Harpsfield*, and others. This learned Father, in this Book, gives us the following Account of this miraculous Gift.

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This wonderful Gift of curing this Disease, called in Latin *Struma* (says he) now the *King's Evil* (for no other Reason, but because it has been healed by Kings) was derived from *Edward* the Confessor, to all the Kings of *England*, and remains as a holy Inheritance unto this Day, and hath been, and is daily, with good Success, practised by our modern Kings, although they have professed a Religion quite contrary to that of St. *Edward*; yet by his Merits (as it may be piously supposed) they work this wonderful Cure. Nay, Queen *Elizabeth*, but a Woman, and of another Religion, had the like Power, and cured many thereby, as it is well known to Men of Credit still living. Therefore the *French* are all deceived; and particularly the *French* Author of the *English* History, *Andrew de Chainé*, did not speak candidly, and as he thought, when he denies that the Kings of *England* ever enjoyed this Virtue, affirming it to be a Gift peculiar to them of *France*, derived from St. *Lewis*; and therefore it is likely, that if any such Thing there be amongst them, they must rather have received it from our Kings, than theirs have it absolutely, and particularly to themselves. And this learned Writer, to confirm

firm the Certainty of what he has here delivered, gives us an Account from *William of Malmsbury*, of King *Edward's* miraculously curing a Woman who had a Swelling under her Chin, which was so large and full of Corruption, that it much disfigured and deformed her Face, wherein bred Worms which had a most loathsome nasty Smell. Long had she suffered under this nauseous Distemper, till at length being admonished *in her Sleep*, she repaired to Court, in hopes of Relief from the King's own Hands, either by his washing, touching, or blessing the diseased Place. And being come before the King, and having told him her Case, notwithstanding the Foulness and Stench of the Sore, he washed the Parts afflicted with his Royal Hands, and blessed them with the Sign of the Cross, and instantly the Skin broke, and the Worms and Corruption gushed out, the Swelling asswaged, and all Anguish of Pain being ceased, she perfectly recovered her Health.

Do we not here perceive that this most pious King, by his excellent Deeds, appeared in the World, not like a mortal Creature? Do not his Miracles bear a great resemblance to those that were wrought by the Apostles? And is it not

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plain from hence *, that he entailed as an Hereditary Vertue on his Successors, the Kings of *England*, a Power of Healing the *Stuma* or *King's Evil*, with this Condition, That they maintain and support the Christian Faith, in order to its Continuance in that princely Line, where the Scepter hath been weighed by God's Vicegerent. What can be more convincing than the Miracles effected by this King, related by *Alured*, the Abbot of *Rhieval*, who informs us, That a blind Man being admonished to go to the King to have his Sight restored, desired the Chamberlain to acquaint the King with his Case, † which he did: Let him come (said the holy King) why should I be grieved, but rather rejoiced, if the divine Goodness is so graciously pleased, as by my *unworthy Hands*, to bestow this promised Benefit upon him. The Man was brought in, and by the *Touch* and Blessing of the King, abundance of corrupted Blood ran down from his Eyes between his Royal Hands, whereby they were cleared, and the swelling of his Eye-lids asswaged. The Patient cried out, *I see my sovereign*

* Tooker's Charisma.

† J. Porter.

Lord and King, and thy Face shineth like unto the Face of an Angel standing before me. Also two blind Men, and another that had but one Eye, by being sprinkled with the Water wherein the holy Man had washed, were all Three restored to perfect Sight.

It cannot reasonably be expected that I should gradually proceed and give an Account of Persons cured in all the intermediate Reigns, from *Q. Elizabeth* to the present Time; for this would be a Task more troublesome than instructive and entertaining: It shall suffice that I observe, that this miraculous Gift has been recorded in different Reigns by *John Brampton, R. Hovedine, Polidore Virgil, Nich. Harpsfield*, and others; for I challenge any one to bring any Authority to prove, that this sanative Faculty has been ever wanting * or removed from the princely Line. Nay, even *Queen Elizabeth*, who withdrew her self from the Catholick Faith, did notwithstanding, most certainly enjoy this divine Gift of miraculously healing the *King's Evil*, as is beyond contradiction

* *Brown's Charisma Basilicon.*

testified by Dr. *Tooker*, who lived in her Time.

The Doctor tells us of a Maid of the ancient Family of the *Turbevils*, who was for Ten Years troubled with this evil Disease; but being touched by the Queen she recovered. The Doctor afterwards observing the Gold gone from her Neck, demanded of her the Reason thereof; she tells him her Necessity compell'd her to sell it, and yet she remained well. Whence he, as other wise Men have conjectured, that the Gold given is only a charitable Token of the Prince, and no more; for she continued many Years afterward without any Relapse. And yet it's plain, this does not always so succeed, for there are several Instances of Persons in some late Reigns, that have lost their Gold, who have had the Disease returned upon them again.

The same Author informs us of one *John Capel*, of *Exon*, the Son of an honest Citizen, and a Daughter of the same Person, both troubled with the *King's Evil*, and both cured of their Distempers by her Majesty's gracious Touch. But there were not wanting some disaffected Persons even in her Reign, that interpreted her utterly renouncing this

this divine Gift, because when she was in *Glocestershire*, many poor People afflicted with this Disease pressing upon her in an unruly manner, she let fall these Words: *Alas! poor People, I cannot, I cannot cure you; it is God alone who can do it.* Whereas we are to understand no more by those Words *, than that she only removed her Subjects Eyes from her self, to desire their looking up to Heaven. And it is credibly reported, that before and after this Time, she cured some Hundreds of People afflicted with this Disease.

King *James the First* succeeded her, and continued the same fanative Power all his Life Time. After whom was *Charles the First*, of blessed Memory, who performed these Cures in a very strange and miraculous manner, sometimes with and sometimes without the Gold, by Prayers and Benediction only. I have seen a Letter written by Dr. *John Nicholas*, Warden of *Winchester College*, which certainly gives an Account of the most astonishing Cure effected by the Prayers of this King, that was ever heard of.

The Letter informs us, that the Person who was afflicted with the *King's*

* *Tooker.*

Evil was one *Robert Cole*, an Inn-keeper at *Winton*, that was highly diseased with the *King's Evil*, who having made use of a Water which only kept the Sores clean, despaired of all farther Benefit till he could obtain the King's Touch.

His Majesty being about this Time removed * from the Isle of *Wight*, passed through *Winton*, where this Object of Charity pressing to come near him, was prevented and ill treated by the Soldiers: Upon which he making several Exclamations of *God save the King*, it reached his sacred Ears; upon which he gave the weak and despairing Man his Blessing in the like Words to these: I see thou art not permitted to come near me, and I cannot tell what thou wouldst have, but God bless thee and grant thy Desire. After which, without the King's stroking, the Diseased Man returned to the Liquor he had formerly washed his Sores with, upon which the Water daily wasted, altho' the Bottle was secured in a Cupboard until it was quite dried up. At length the Bottle became scaled in its

* *Brown's Charis.*

Sides, and many Botches appeared in it. And as these Effects appeared in the earthen Vessel, the Man's Face and Throat healed with equal speed. After this a Gentlewoman that saw the Bottle, attempting to pick off some of the Excrescences, the Places which had been affected in his Throat gave him new Trouble, though nothing was vented there.

Now I challenge all the Scepticks upon the Earth, to produce an Instance more astonishing than this, or where the Prayers of a holy Person were ever attended with more surprizing Effects. It was not sufficient it seems in this Case, that the poor Man should be relieved from all his Maladies and become Whole ; but this extended Miracle, if I may so call it, did not stop here, the daily washing the Sores with the Water lessened its Quantity, and the Bottle it self became strangely diseased.

Fabulous Writers may impose upon us if we credit them, when they tell us some very strange and surprizing Effects that have been translated from one Body to another. Thus *Albertus* promises a strange Effect from a *Collyrium*, (and such a one as Thieves would account inestimable) which is to make one see in the dark ;

dark; it being only to take the right Eye of a Hedge-Hog, boil it in Oil, and preserve it in a brazen Vessel: Or what is mentioned by *Kiranides*, of the Left Stone of a Weezel wrap'd up in the Skin of a she Mule, to prevent Conception. But these Things, as there is no reason in the World to credit them, so if they were found to be true, I should look upon them to be far short of this miraculous diseased Bottle.

From the whole Design and Tendency of this Letter, cannot any one readily imagine, that I am very far from endeavouring to abridge the miraculous Power of this divine Gift of Healing; yet when I thoroughly contemplate the Wonderfulness of the last related miraculous Cure of *R. Cole*, I cannot but say, that had I been then present, I should have hardly forbore making that Proclamation which a *Roman* Emperor did upon the Occasion of the *Ludi Seculares*, or Sports celebrated once in a Hundred Years; *Come and behold what no Man living hath seen, or shall ever see again.*

But farther, what shall we say, when we find the Efficacy of his Majesty's Touch was so powerful, that the Night after a young Man was touched for the
Evil

Evil in his Thigh, and had a Shilling put about his Neck, which he brought with him, his Tents fell out of his Wounds * *and could not be kept in*, and the Man soon recovered.

Or to the Case of Mr. *Foster* of *Windsor*, blind for about two Years, who had scrophulous Tumours about his Throat and other Parts; but being touched by his Majesty † received so much Benefit by it, that in fourteen Days *he presently recovered his Sight*.

Or that of a Citizen's Daughter of *Winchester*, who was touched for the Evil in her Eye, and during the Time the King was at Prayers, her Eye flew open; and immediately her Mother proclaiming it for a Miracle, it came to the King's Ear, who having asked her several Questions in relation to it, paused awhile, and with †† a kind of venerable Admiration, took her by the Hand and kissed her.

To repeat the Question I have before made use of, What can we say to these Things? Can human Reason ever pretend to investigate such a supernatural Power? Ought we not rather suffer our selves to be wrap'd up in Admiration, when we consider the transcending Effects of Miracles! Divine Miracles are done without Means, Forms, Rites, Ceremonies, &c.

* *Ibid.*† *Ibid.*†† *Ibid.*

So that the Cure ought to be esteem'd Divine which is brought about without Observations, Prescriptions and Applications ; otherwise Cures performed by Means are *beneficia rerum, non curantium potestates*. Divine Miracles are effected *sine ullâ vi carminum, sine herbarum aut grammantium succis, sine ullâ aliquâ observatione sollicitâ, sacrorum, Libaminum, temporum, sine ullis adminiculis rerum, sine ullius ritus Observatione vel lege non inquiri non exigo* (saith Arnobius, whose Rule this is.) *Quis Deus, aut quo tempore, cui fuerit auxiliatus, aut quem fractam restituerit sanitati, illud solud audire desidero, an sine ullius adjunctione materiae, i. e. medicaminis alicujus ad tactam morbos jusserit ad hominibus evolare.* Which how well they agree with the Cures effected in the *King's Evil* by the Touch may be easily perceiv'd, if we only make an abatement for the Application of the Hands, the Gold, and the Ceremonies. Miracles are understood to be the admirable or wonderful Works of God, which we cannot conceive to have been done by natural Causes, but only by his immediate Operation. For if we understand the natural Causes whereby they are effected, how uncommon so ever they be ; or if we have often seen the like done before, tho' we do not conceive the natural

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ral Cause thereof, and we longer admire it, or call it a Miracle: *Quæ usu quotidiano novimus & frequenti experientia, ea neque admiramur, neque ad eorum causas investigandas multum exitari solemus, quam sæpe occultiores sint inventuque difficiliore aliis, quæ ob raritatem, hominum studia & animos maximè occupant.*

Divine Miracles must therefore certainly make divine Impressions upon the Minds of those that believe them, by reason they are the Seals of divine Truth: From whence it naturally follows, that as it is undoubtedly of very dangerous Consequence to counterfeit the King's Seal, whereby all acts of State are confirmed and made authentically known to the People; so it is to pretend to God's Seal, whereby he doth convincingly make known his Will to the World. Nor ought King *Charles II.* be esteemed to fall short of his Royal Father in his Power of working Miracles; the vast Variety of Things which he effected by stroking with his sacred Hands, would be needless for me to attempt to enumerate, seeing many of them have been already made pullick, beside others which are still recorded in the Memories of some Persons then living.

If we reflect on the Performances of King *Pyrrhus*, who cured Diseases with

his Finger ; or *Vespasian*, who cured Two by touching them, as *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* avow ; or those Persons in *Turkey* or *Africk*, who boasted to have received the like Qualifications by the Favour of their Prophet *Mahomet* ; or the Power of healing Diseases, attributed to the *Alexiaci Salutatores* of *Spain*, or *Bensedevios*, which the *Roman* Casuists and Physicians speak so much of ; what will they avail when compared with the surprizing Miracles before related ?

Did not the *Arrians* pretend to do Miracles by the infinite Power of Christ, to confirm the Denial of his Divinity ; and *Menander*, to blind his Followers, pretend to restore them to sight ? *Basilides* stroked and deluded the Multitude. *Cerintus* and *Ebion* performed as strange Things as they taught. *Valentinus* and *Heracleon* first set up with new Cures, and afterwards with new Opinions. *Apelles*, *Severus*, *Tatianus* and *Montanus* first pretended the Gift of Healing, and afterward that of Prophecy. But what if all these Things which were said to be done, and believed in credulous Ages, and the reputed Authors of them proved Impostors, ought they to create a Disesteem of the before-mentioned Performances, transacted in an Age of so much *Light* as ours, and attested by such a Number of excellent *Divines*,

vines, as well as others of great *Learning*? The Consequence of this would be, that because by the first Appearance of any pretended Miracles, inconsiderate People may be cajoled to believe some Errors; so upon the Discovery of the Bottom of them, they would cast off all appearance of Truth; and because they find themselves imposed on once, their natural Methods of Reasoning could not satisfy them, but that they have been abused always.

This History does not relate the Romantick Performances of certain Enthusiasts and Visionaries, any otherways than to expose them. If it recounts the Impostures and vile Practices of certain deluded Persons, does it do it with any other View than the setting this supernatural Gift in a true Light! Is this wonderful Power formerly practised by our Kings, and now in *Italy*, sufficient to justify some Persons in the Belief of certain strange Abilities formerly pretended to by others? If so, we may entertain a favourable Opinion of the *Grecian* that went upon a Vision 2400 Miles to cure the Emperor of his Deafness, that had been in his Grave four Years: Or the *Italian* that came by an Impulse to *France*, to restore Sight to the Blind, and lost both his Eyes: Or the *German* that went, as he said, by
 Inspi-

Inspiration, to cure the Duke of *Tuscany* of the *Sciatica*, by breathing upon him, and died a Prisoner in *Leghorn*: Or the *Spaniard* that went upon a Vision 600 Miles to cure the Duke of *Venice* of the Gout, and died himself of it in Irons.

These Instances which I have brought are a sufficient Proof that Time will expose those Persons who have been so enthusiastick or vain as to suffer themselves to be led away by a Belief, that they have been endowed with a Power of curing Diseases after a supernatural manner. And there is no doubt to be made, but some of those Persons I have mention'd, had their respective Votaries, who were by degrees worked into a Belief of the Reality of some of their Performances. But you see Time has by degrees discovered their Impostures, and made the Memories of those who pretended to practise such Things, as ridiculous as those that were their *Abettors*.

I had a Design of giving you an Account of some wonderful Things lately effected here in *Italy*, but I find this Letter has already extended it self much beyond what I at first designed; and I shall the rather omit them at this Time, because I every Day expect to see a compleat Collection of these miraculous Cures wrought in those Parts by that learned Person the Reverend Father *Lewis*, of the Society of *Jesus*; so that this Letter of mine may serve as a preliminary Piece to that Collection.

I have nothing more to add upon this Occasion than to inform you, that besides the ancient Authorities I have before brought, there are several much more modern ones of our own Nation, that have spoke so positively of
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the infallible Certainty of this miraculous Power of Curing, that one would think there should be no one Person left who doubted of it. I might here subjoin the Testimonies of *Tooker*, *Heylin*, *Collier* and *Echard*; but Mr. *Collier* has spoken so full and particular on this Subject in the first Volume of his Ecclesiastical History, that the quoting what he says in relation to the incontestable Truth of it, will be a sufficient Satisfaction to any one who desires to be satisfied in the Opinion of so exact and infallible a Writer. That this Prince, *Edward the Confessor*, cured the *King's Evil*, says he, is beyond Dispute. And since the Credit of this *Miracle* is unquestionable, I see no reason why we should scruple believing the rest *. The first Person cured by the King was a young Woman; the manner was by stroking the affected Place with his Hand: Upon this Operation the Patient grew sensibly better, and the Cure was perfected in a Week's Time. He adds, The *King's Evil* is a schirrous Tumour, which commonly settles in the Neck and Face, and sometimes in other glandulous Parts of the Body. The Cause of this Distemper is supposed to be a viscous Humour impregnated with acid Particles; which by discharging it self by large Quantities into the Pores and Ductus's of the small Glands, coagulates and grows hard by degrees, and so produces this sort of Tumour or Imposthumation. If this Lympha or Humour happens to grow more sharp and corroding, it will rise to the Malignity of a Cancer, and

* *Malmf. de Gest. Reg. 1. 2. p. 51.*

Alfred, Rieval, p. 390.

then falling upon the Bones, it makes them turn black and mortified. King *Edward* the *Confessor* was the first that cured this Distemper, and from him it has descended as an hereditary Miracle upon all his Successors. To dispute the Matter of Fact, continues he, is to go to the Excess of Scepticism, to deny our Senses, and to be incredulous even to Ridiculousness.

And here it may not be improper to relate a Story of a Roman Catholick in Queen *Elizabeth's* Time. This Person, who was very firm in his Communion, happened to be thrown into Prison, probably upon the Score of his Recusancy: Being thrown into Prison, I say, he grew terribly afflicted with the *King's Evil*; and having apply'd himself to Physicians, and gone through a long Fatigue of Pain and Expence, without the least Success, at last he was touched by the Queen and perfectly cured. And being asked how the Matter stood with him? his Answer was, He was now satisfy'd by experimental Proof, that the Pope's Excommunication of her Majesty signified nothing, since she still continued bless'd with so miraculous a Quality.

Thus we see, my Friend, with what Zeal and Affection to this divine Gift, this wonderful Man speaks: And indeed I cannot but say, the same Spirit is discovered throughout his whole voluminous History, which makes him read here by us with infinite Delight and Satisfaction; insomuch, that when we speak of an accurate, exact, and impartial Ecclesiastical Writer, our Words are but so many repeated Eulogiums in his Praise.

Rome, Aug. 23.

1721.

I am, S I R,

Yours, &c,

M. T.

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